

U.S. MODEL COURSE FOR GMDSS OPERATOR TRAINING PART A- COURSE FRAMEWORK

The U.S. Coast Guard Task Force on Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS) Implementation recommended a training program of **not less than seventy (70) hours in length** in order to meet the requirements of the Learning Objectives required by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) for the Standards of Training Certification, and Watchkeeping (STCW) Code. The Coast Guard has approved this approach and adopts the program with minor editorial changes.

This document, PART A - COURSE FRAMEWORK, is supplemented with a PART B consisting of the U.S. Model Course Learning Objectives and the STCW Code Table A-IV/2 Annex, Equipment Operation Competencies. The enclosed lesson plans have the GMDSS course divided into a week of theory and a week of practical instruction. The lesson plans are guidelines and anyone submitting a lesson plan may combine the two and have an integrated approach of instruction.

Certain prerequisites are necessary to ensure that the specified learning objectives and equipment operation competencies are fully achieved by students successfully completing the seventy hour course.

Instructors in any approved GMDSS Course shall make full use of the content, text books, and course materials identified in the IMO Model Course on the GMDSS General Operator's Certificate (GOC).

The **seventy (70) hour course length represents a minimum for an approved GMDSS course** to meet the goals of the STCW. A specific number of hours for each learning objective has not been specified. The PART B listing of recommended times is for guidance only. Variations in instructional technique, student ability and equipment may demand that each program make adjustments to achieve the learning objectives. It is beyond the scope of the guidelines to accommodate all the variations likely to arise.

LANGUAGE OF COURSE INSTRUCTION

The course shall be taught in the English. If a student speaks the course language as a second language, he or she shall demonstrate total fluency, both written and oral, of GMDSS technical terms in the language used in teaching the course.

COURSE ENTRY STANDARDS

Students shall have prior knowledge of radio communications; fluency in the language used in the course; competency in using computers; and sea experience or enrollment in an approved cadet training program. Students shall be screened prior to commencement of the class to ensure these prerequisites are met. If students lack the prerequisites, additional training or a course of longer duration may be necessary.

The minimum computer competency required is a demonstration of the ability to understand basic keyboard commands and use a word processor to compose, store and save messages.

All students must have at least one year experience as a member of a navigational watch on the bridge of ocean going vessels, or service as a licensed Radio Officer or Engineer. Cadets or candidates for U.S. Coast Guard licenses must be members of a formal training program such as at a state or Federal Maritime Academy or have acquired equivalent experience and basic communications training as a prerequisite for this course.

CLASS SIZE

Practical training shall be undertaken in small groups of not more than 6 students per instructor to allow sufficient interaction with GMDSS equipment or simulators. There must be sufficient equipment or simulators to train at least two practical training groups at once in classes with more than six students. There shall be no more than 12 students per instructor for classroom instruction in short intensive programs or 30 students per instructor in extended programs such as those at a maritime academy.

INSTRUCTORS

All training and instruction shall be conducted by personnel qualified in their subject matter. Instructors in charge of practical training shall possess a valid General Operator's Certificate or equivalent qualifications. All instructors shall have a general knowledge of ship operations and maritime safety, including search and rescue procedures. Instructors must meet the requirements of any U.S. Coast Guard Navigation and Vessel Inspection Circular on Instructors, Examiners and/or Assessor Qualifications.

FACILITIES and EQUIPMENT

Classrooms shall have a blackboard, whiteboard, or flip chart and an overhead projector. For practical training, there must be adequate working space to allow no more than 2 students to operate and practice on a single piece of lab communications training equipment at one time. For each of these small practical training groups, the minimum actual equipment specified in IMO's General Operator's Model Course shall be provided. This will ensure each student receives sufficient hands on practical training. The Course will ensure that sufficient practice time is available in addition to the 70 hours of instruction.

Approved computer simulators capable of emulating all functions identified in the STCW Code, Table A-IV/2 Annex of PART B, may be used to satisfy requirements for practical training. Approved GMDSS equipment must be available for training any task which the simulator cannot accurately replicate.

STUDENT TESTING and CERTIFICATION

Sufficient time shall be allowed for comprehensive oral, practical, and written examinations of each student to ensure that the practical and theoretical learning objectives have been achieved and that each student can meet the standard of competence specified in section A-IV/2 of the STCW Code. One hour is recommended as the minimum time for each student to accomplish this testing.

Realizing that a particular simulator may not adequately test all competencies required in the STCW Code, the school must verify which competencies were tested by the simulator and which ones required testing by use of actual GMDSS equipment.

To receive a Certificate of Completion from an approved course, each student must demonstrate that he or she has learned the objectives listed in the GMDSS Model Course and can perform each competency listed in Annex A-IV/2. The final examination shall be a full survey of those skills to ensure sufficient competence in all GMDSS subsystems. The test should consist of 100 questions with not more than 20% from the combined EPIRB, SART, and NAVTEX subject areas. The required passing grade shall be 75% or greater.

Any time devoted to teaching questions and answers or other matters related to an FCC examination, shall not be included in calculating the required seventy (70) hours of instruction.

LICENSED OFFICERS CURRENTLY HOLDING A GMDSS CERTIFICATION

Until February 1, 2002, a licensed officer who currently holds a GMDSS certification will not be required to complete a 70 hour training course if the individual has:

- passed a comprehensive examination covering the GMDSS and radio communications theory with a grade of 75% or higher and a practical examination demonstrating the ability to perform ***all*** tasks listed in the equipment competencies tables; ***and either:***
 - has completed a minimum of 140 contact hours instructing in a GMDSS program; or
 - has a minimum of one year of sea time as a radio officer; or
 - has completed at least 35 hours of formal classroom training in GMDSS.

The tests can be given at a school with an approved GMDSS course or on board a vessel by a designated examiner recognized by the US Coast Guard. If the candidate fails either the theoretical or practical examination, he or she must successfully complete the 70 hour GMDSS course.

After February 1, 1999, all officers who do not meet the criteria above, and desiring STCW GMDSS certification, will have to take an approved 70 hour GMDSS Course.

ENCL: PART B: (1) U.S. MODEL COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES
(2) TABLE A-IV/2 ANNEX, EQUIPMENT OPERATION COMPETENCIES